

Georgia: Margaret Silliman, Rachael Liu, Cristina Dalton.

Idaho: Samuel Cuentas, Rebecca Levi, Christiana Stone, Jesse Cole, Annabelle Day, Solveig Norton.

Illinois: Natalia Czachorowski, Mary Kuprianczyk, Samia Abdul-Qadir, Adam Koszyk, Jason Yang, Clayton Pope, DeAnna Pope.

Indiana: Lauren Ciulla, Matthew Frye, Emily Huff.

Iowa: Susan Alverio.

Kansas: Vasavi Garimella, Jared Gillen, Arjun Mahajan, Ryan Mohamadi, Katherine Walsworth, Irfan Ansari.

Kentucky: Katherine Speece, John Garland, Zachariah Kiser, Mackenzie Rigney, Kayla Sears.

Louisiana: Sean Thomas.

Maryland: Hansel Motiram, Ryan Briscoe, Madeline Carwile, Lucy Lee, WeiAnne Reidy, Alix MacKillop, Clara da Silva, Nikhil Swaminathan.

Massachusetts: Mikayla Steele, Alexandra Duplin, Ishan Shukla, Harrison Theodore, Maria Theodore.

Michigan: Emily Deese, Jeremy Tang, Emma Hicks, Sara Trojanowski, Emily Prokop, Thomas Libcke.

Minnesota: Emily Baer, Matthew Baer, Braden O'Connor, Payton Puerzer.

Mississippi: Lane Mitchell, Abby Pitts, Mamie Albritton.

Missouri: Olivia Hoijarvi, Allison Licavoli, Natalie Dameron.

Nebraska: Luis Sanchez-Romo, John Paul Terneus, Terese Navarra, Ethan Nelson.

Nevada: David Tegtmeier, Sara Tegtmeier, Neha Zafar, Taimur Khalid.

New Jersey: Satchel Bell, Funda Akilli, David Crain III, Michael Doliszny, Madison Gandy, Marta Majewski, Amanda Olivio, Urv Patel, Anthony Uzzolina, Andrew Laberee, Dominic Esposito, Christopher Lauria, Mitchell Lauria, Maya Ravichandran, Allison Wetherell, Erica Wu, Rahul Yerrabelli, Nicholas Coleburn, Ryan Robert Murphy, Vaed Prasad, Felicia Aschettino, Madilyn Somers, Lindsay Fogel, Maura Herbertson, Thiago Santos, Elena Boal, Priya Vulchi.

New York: Heejin Han, Christopher Kim, Naome Sajjani, Genevieve Bruen, Edward McCabe, Santo Tiralosi, Mahika Had, Fiona Dubrosa, William Gregson, Allison Herskovitz, Zachary Kunow, Kathleen Schofield, Lucas Zhao, Charles Siragusa, Gabriel Curcione.

North Carolina: Holly Hutcheson, Jacob Rowe, Emma Morris, Thomas Douglas, Capri D'Souza, Caroline Fitzgerald, Lauraleigh Guthrie, Jack Maginnes, Delaney Dunlap, Jenna Viveiros, Bennett David, Ashley Jamison, Kathryn Ellis, Jordan Feldman, Lawton Gresham.

Ohio: Natalie Carter, Ellen Haney, Pakrush Katragadda, Katherine Skelly, Max Lee, Hannah Addington, Arihant Chordia, Vidur Prasad, Sanjana Yerubandi, Laurel Grae, Jaidev Sharma, Alan Ai, Dusstyn Reynolds.

Oklahoma: Luisamaria Rubio.

Oregon: Kendall Fleshman, Megan Baumhardt.

Pennsylvania: Nisha Arya, Joshita Varshney, Elizabeth Belka, Victoria Belka, Noah Berkowitz, Seth Berkowitz, Lindsay Fullerton, Samantha Gable, Jasna Janikic, Erin Markham, Emily Matthews, Swathi Prakash, Anthony Radcliffe, Kristen Sparhawk, Stephanie Waldstein, Indra Alagar, Jaya Alagar, Krishnan Alagar, Rajan Alagar, Sarah Laible, Teja Polisetty.

Rhode Island: Aidan Sowa, Ryan Sowa.

South Carolina: Maggie Bowyer, Mary Grace Shannon, Jeremy Ward.

Tennessee: Evan Ladd, Carmen Ross, Grant Gammon.

Texas: Chelsea Parrott, Briana Gonzalez, Ruveyda Karaca, Almaas Khan, Gopal Raman, Monica Attaway, Edward Cen, Adam Hoffman, BJ Kim, Animate Mazurek, Miki Somosot, Srikanth Anantha, Tejna Dasari, Ashish Dave, Shrey Derasari, Siri Jois, Emily Jue, Eric Li, Rahul Popat, Charles Wang, Lauren Yang, Darrel Dennis, James Hefner, Jarrod Clark, Shan Su, Joseph Nemece.

Utah: Hannah Brau, Mariah Pay, Payam Rasheed, Sofia Tiratto, Madison Arriaza, Saja Hassoun, McKenna O'Connor.

Virginia: Caroline Yi, Jordan Hibbs, Kimberly Laker, Lisa Huang, Pavan Krishnan.

Washington: Andrew Chin, David Singleton, Benjamin Stewart, John McManis, Rachel Demaree, Isabella Maehl, Katherine Chen, Nathan Chen, Nicholas Grosinger, Alexandra Marsh, Jessica Waller, William Waller.

West Virginia: Alonzo Webb.

Wyoming: Bailey Anderson, Grace Anderson, Lexi Bedard, Maxwell Bockmann, Sara Brennecke, Molly Burns, Tanner Laurence Christensen, Kaitlyn Erramouspe, Elexis Forgey, Benjamin Gallagher, Daniel Garcia, Liam Guille, Charlotte Hecht, Jarom Herring, Lily Joslin, Carli Knight, Konnar Knotwell, Cassidy Little, Thomas Lubnau III, Gregory Marchal, Patrick Marchal, Conner Martin, Luke McIlvain, Nicholas Nelson, Megan Pachniak, Giovanni Pizzato, McKenzie Powell, Devrae Russell, Karen Russell, Meagan Skolnick, Jaycie Wells, Ben Wetzel.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, on June 5, 2017, the Senate adopted S. Res. 176, a resolution commemorating the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem. I am a cosponsor of this resolution. Unfortunately, I missed the vote due to a delayed flight. If I were in Washington, DC, during the time of this vote, I would have cast my vote in support of this resolution.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ACCOUNTABILITY AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ACT

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, earlier this month, the Senate passed by voice vote the Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017. I recognize this bill is the result of a bipartisan compromise, and I commend Senator TESTER, ranking member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, for his efforts to find agreement on this particularly challenging issue.

Everyone in a position of public trust, particularly those serving at the VA, must be held accountable for their actions. Whistleblowers must also be protected so that misconduct can be brought to light. This balance between accountability and transparency is essential to ensure that the services provided to the public—particularly to veterans—are of the highest quality and that we can attract the best and brightest to Federal service.

Unfortunately, while the bill passed by Congress seeks to strike the appropriate balance, I remain seriously concerned about some of the bill's provisions which would expedite the process of terminating employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, by reducing current due process protections.

sions which would expedite the process of terminating employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, by reducing current due process protections.

To ensure the integrity of the Federal civil service, it is essential that Federal employees have access to constitutionally protected due process rights. Specifically, the bill lowered the evidentiary standard for firing rank-and-file employees for misconduct from "preponderance" of the evidence, 50 percent or more, to substantial, 30 percent or more. Reducing due process protections for rank-and-file VA employees in this manner will make it harder for the Federal Government to attract the best and brightest to public service.

During the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee's consideration of the bill, I cosponsored an amendment offered by Senator BROWN to strike the section of the bill lowering the evidentiary standard. Unfortunately, the amendment was not adopted. Going forward, I intend to closely monitor the VA's implementation of the act to see that these new authorities are not abused in order to retaliate against VA workers. Not only would this be unfair, but it would also exacerbate the Department's challenging retention issues.

I am also disappointed that this bill does not address the longstanding recruitment and retention issues facing the VA. According to the VA, there are over 30,000 vacancies across the VA, including over 150 in Hawaii, for frontline medical personnel that this administration has not filled as of the end of January 2017.

The over 40,000 veterans in Hawaii who are enrolled in the VA healthcare system deserve the best healthcare and highest ethical and professional standards from those they depend on to provide that care. While we must ensure whistleblowers can come forward without fear of retaliation and those who violate the public trust are held accountable, the VA cannot effectively carry out its mission without being fully staffed.

While this legislation was supported by VA Secretary Shulkin and makes some useful changes to improve accountability, we still have much work to do to ensure that veterans in Hawaii and across the country have access to the best healthcare we can provide.

Therefore, going forward, I will closely monitor the VA's implementation of this law to ensure that the changes made are not abused. I will also continue working to see that the staff vacancies in Hawaii and across the country are filled with qualified personnel.

MINORITY HEALTH

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am deeply disappointed by the secrecy that has been employed by my colleagues in their reckless attempts to gut the Affordable Care Act. It is clear to me that, in the absence of hearings,

of public debate, and of any bill text at all, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will go to any length to suppress the undeniable successes associated with the Affordable Care Act.

Unfortunately, that now includes blocking a noncontroversial resolution to promote and bring awareness to National Minority Health Month simply because the text contains facts about the Affordable Care Act. They have decided that concealing the reality of what the Affordable Care Act has brought to minority communities is more important than promoting minority health.

I am proud to help lead this resolution with Senator CARDIN and my colleagues here this afternoon because raising awareness and finding ways to promote minority health is critically important to the future of our Nation and should be a shared priority amongst my colleagues. As of last year, over half of nonelderly Americans who lacked insurance were people of color and minorities face increased barriers when trying to access the care that is available to them.

In the past, our Republican colleagues worked with us on this resolution, which is why it has seen bipartisan and unanimous support. Now, however, like the secret healthcare bill they are drafting behind closed doors, they have turned an important and commonsense resolution into a political football, refusing to pass it unless it is stripped of any and all facts that don't fit their false narrative on the Affordable Care Act. The fact of the matter is that the Affordable Care Act has worked for minority communities. The Affordable Care Act has reduced the uninsured rate for minority communities by at least 35 percent.

It has led to a 7 percent drop in the uninsured rate amongst African Americans and has cut the uninsured rate for Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders in half. It has provided new protections for American Indians and Native Alaskans while cutting the uninsured rate amongst those communities by nearly 10 percent. The facts show that minorities have seen some of the largest gains in health insurance coverage under the Affordable Care Act and, despite the work we still have before us, have more access to affordable coverage than ever before.

Still, many in minority communities struggle to obtain coverage and receive quality care, despite chronic diseases disproportionately impacting many minority groups. That is why the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which was created to address and prevent chronic disease under the ACA, is so critical to minority health. That is also why these same communities will yet again feel the brunt of these callous and misguided cuts should the prevention fund be eliminated along with the ACA.

African Americans are twice as likely to die from diabetes as White Ameri-

cans. Thankfully, the prevention fund has invested \$291 million in diabetes prevention. Latino women are 44 percent more likely to be diagnosed with cervical cancer than White women. Therefore, the prevention fund has invested \$218 million in breast and cervical cancer prevention. Overall, the prevention fund has invested \$227 million to the Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health Program.

But eliminating the prevention fund wouldn't just negatively impact minority communities. In Connecticut, the Fund has invested over \$27 million in our communities since 2010, improving the lives and well-being of people there every day.

This strong investment has provided more Connecticut women with screenings for cancer. It has given our State health department the ability to better prevent diabetes, heart disease, and stroke and fight obesity through improved physical activity. It has allowed Connecticut to address school health more successfully, enriching our children's lives and inspiring a new generation of more healthy and happy citizens. It has provided the Connecticut Immunization Program with nearly half of its funding, with the program stating they "don't know how we could continue to exist without this funding."

Should the Affordable Care Act be repealed and the Prevention Fund eliminated, with TrumpCare cruelly and inadequately thrust upon our Nation in its place, the consequences would be devastating, not only for minority communities, but for the country as a whole. Bottom line: the Affordable Care Act has improved access to quality and affordable healthcare for all Americans and particularly for those that need it the most.

I sincerely hope that my Republican colleagues stop denying, ignoring, and concealing that the Affordable Care Act—and the minority communities that benefited from it—has helped our Nation's health. I stand ready to build upon the great strides made in improving minority health since the Affordable Care Act, and I hope my colleagues are ready to do the same. Thank you.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING THE LITTLE ROCK AIR FORCE BASE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize and congratulate the Little Rock Air Force Base, LRAFB, Community Council team on their recognition as the 2017 Association of Defense Communities Member of the Year. This prestigious honor is indicative of the community council's exceptional and unwavering commitment for the past 62 years to the Department of Defense, U.S. Air Force,

U.S. Air Force Reserve, and Arkansas National Guard. These organizations, along with the LRAFB surrounding communities, form the celebrated Team Little Rock.

Since its founding in 1955, Little Rock Air Force Base has enjoyed a tremendous amount of support, respect, and appreciation from within the local community. The LRAFB Community Council, comprised of dedicated local civic leaders, has passionately championed the base's mission, while fostering partnership efforts between the military and civilian communities. Furthermore, as the Department of Defense and U.S. Air Force have faced an unprecedented 8 years of fiscal uncertainty, the community council has remained a steadfast leader and staunch advocate for the Team Little Rock mission, its airmen, and their families.

The LRAFB Community Council long ago established an enduring relationship with its Arkansas congressional delegation to ensure a sustained awareness of base needs, successes, and challenges. This outstanding example of leadership demonstrates the community council's commitment to building a dedicated and resilient community network around Little Rock's sole Air Force installation.

The level of collaboration between the community council and Team Little Rock is simply unprecedented. For example, Jacksonville and Little Rock have adopted ordinances and regulations preventing civilian encroachment that would impede aircraft operations, while many military-civilian initiatives have been formulated to offer mutual services, thus improving quality of life on both sides of the fence. Moreover, the Jacksonville fire department and emergency services team regularly participate in both exercises and real-world scenarios with their military counterparts. Finally, Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson appointed past community council president Brad Hegeman to chair the Governor's military affairs committee in order to address the assets, economic impact, benefits, and needs of military installations and military-related businesses throughout Arkansas.

Throughout my time in Congress, I have consistently witnessed the extraordinary and tireless support received by Team Little Rock on behalf of the Little Rock Air Force Base Community Council. The entire community council team is very deserving of this incredible honor, and I am thrilled to officially recognize them as the 2017 Association of Defense Communities Member of the Year. Congratulations, Team Little Rock.●

TRIBUTE TO WENDY NOREN

• Mrs. MCCASKILL. Mr. President, fair elections and voting rights for all Americans are integral to our way of life. Today I wish to honor a dedicated public servant and great Missourian who has spent her entire career ensuring these principals for Boone